

US FOREST SERVICE NORTHWEST MONTANA BACKCOUNTRY AVALANCHE ADVISORY



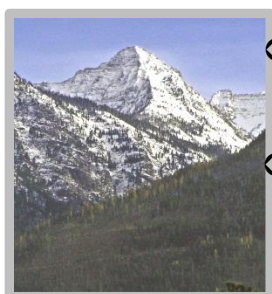
FOR THE GLACIER PARK AND FLATHEAD & KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST AREAS

Avalanche advisory does not apply to developed ski areas

Issue Date: 6 AM, Friday, December 23, 2011
Valid Until: Midnight, Friday, December 23, 2011
Next Update: Tuesday, December 27, 2011
Issued by: Tony Willits

This advisory is a product of the US Forest Service, US Dept. of Agriculture. Along with other snow and avalanche information, it is originally posted at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/flathead>. An audio summary is available via telephone at 406-257-8402

All Mountain Ranges



7,500 ft. elevation



5,000 ft.



Avalanche Danger Summary

2 - Moderate : 5,000 to 7,500 ft. elevation on steep, open terrain

1 - Low : below 5,000

AVALANCHE – INSTABILITY DESCRIPTION

All Mountain Ranges - 5,000 to 7,500 ft. elevation

Danger Level	2 - Moderate
Confidence	Good
Travel Advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heightened avalanche conditions on steep, open slopes and gullies Evaluate snow and terrain carefully
Likelihood of Avalanches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural avalanche unlikely Human triggered avalanches possible
Avalanche Size & Distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small avalanches in specific areas or Larger avalanches in isolated areas Concern is steep, open slopes and gullies lacking vegetative and terrain anchors

AVALANCHE – INSTABILITY DESCRIPTION

All Mountain Ranges - below 5,000 ft. elevation

Danger Level	1 - LOW
Confidence	Good
Travel Advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally safe avalanche conditions exist Watch for unstable snow on isolated terrain features
Likelihood of Avalanches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both natural and human triggered avalanche unlikely
Avalanche Size & Distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very small avalanches in widespread areas or Small avalanche in isolated areas

Because of the general nature of this advisory message, each backcountry party will always need to make their own time and site specific avalanche hazard evaluations. This advisory best describes conditions at the time of its issuance. As time passes avalanche and snow conditions may change, sometimes quite rapidly. Elevation and geographic distinctions used are approximate and transition zones between hazards exist.

Recent Mountain Weather

Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saturday –Thursday --- • Still being influenced by fairly dry air pattern 	
Precipitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly dry in East and West Cabinets and in the northern tier of region • Short impulse of .3 to .6 inches of SWE on Tuesday night recorded @ Noisy Basin and Flattop sites • Moss Peak site received .1.1 inches of SWE overnight Tuesday 	
Temperature	Flathead Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temp's trending downwards from midday on Tuesday from the mid twenties into the low teen's • Some isolated overnight clearing has prompted single digit temp's Thursday night
	Kootenai Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temps near or slightly above from Saturday to midday on Tuesday then temp's moved downward into the mid teen's
Wind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Winds were light to moderate with some wind transport • 	

Field Observation Locations

Thursday, 12-22-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mount Baldy in Purcell Mountains, 25 N of Troy • Southern Whitefish Divide, specifically Smokey Divide NE of Big Mountain
Observer Report Locations	
Thursday, 12-22-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No reports received

Avalanches Observed

No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None observed • Shallow snowpack with an abundance of vegetative and terrain anchors is currently found widespread over the region
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Instability Concern / Avalanche Problem	Level of Concern			
		Most★★★	Less★★	Least ★
New Storm or Near Surface Snow	★	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New snow loading overnight Tuesday was light in the Northern Swan and southern portion of GNP • New snow loading in the Missions was moderate overnight Tuesday 		
Wind Loading	★	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variable, isolated to upper ridge tops above 6000 feet from passing weak disturbance last Thursday, 12/15 and Friday, 12/16 		
Recent or Persistent Buried Weak Layer	★★	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With scattered overnight clearing surface hoar development is occurring but is variable across region • Recent colder temp's has allowed a weakening of interfaces in our shallow snowpack . The temperature gradient process was observed in a shallow snowpack of 50 cms in the in the Southern Whitefish Divide on Thursday • A 3 cm layer of buried surface hoar down 10 cms was observed on Smokey Divide on Thursday. Sporadic cold clear periods have allowed scattered surface hoar development across the region 		

Spring Wet Snow or Melt-Freeze		Not applicable
Rain-on-Snow		Not applicable
Loose Snow		None observed
Other Concerns		

Weather Forecast

[Current NWS Backcountry Forecast](#)

<u>Summary</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expect the fairly dry weather pattern to continue through the weekend under the influence of high pressure Some light snow could occur in the northern portion of our region both on Saturday and Sunday as disturbances ride over the ridge.
Precipitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No significant precip is forecasted
Temperature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mountain temperatures will be pretty mild under this pattern
Wind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> W to SW up to 20 mph from Friday through Sunday

Avalanche Outlook

Trend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The avalanche danger is expected to remain near current levels through the weekend
Concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weather models indicate a change in the dry weather pattern. Starting next week. The upper ridge is expected to fully break down allowing a stronger and more consistently moist west flow to persist over the northern tier of the US. Above 6000 feet elevation, expect at least moderate W to SW winds to transport soft modified snow from the surface 10 to 30 cms on to northerly and easterly aspects Weak surface interfaces and shallow snow packs could be stressed with new storm accumulations.
Comment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>In spite of the relative widespread stability currently always carry and know how to use avalanche safety equipment</i> <i>Watch for a possible rapid change in weather conditions beyond forecast amounts</i> <i>Be alert that if a slope is open enough to ski or highmark currently it is very likely an established avalanche path.</i> <i>Check out the site specific snow stability before jumping in or on</i> <i>Know that shallow snowpacks are notorious for producing trauma injury and death, washing victims over cliffs and into rocks.</i>

Upcoming Events

Flathead Nat'l Forest will also be presenting our advanced public avalanche awareness safety training for skiers, snowshoers, snowboarders, and mountaineers over the first two weeks of January, 2012. The program is a four night lecture series with two Saturday field sessions. Lecture dates are Tuesdays and Thursdays, January 3,5,10,&12. The all-day Saturday field sessions are January 7&14. Lecture location and time is the same as the weather workshop above.